

Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi
The Adoration of the Magi



KRESS CATALOGUE NUMBER

K1425

IDENTIFIER

2039

ARTIST

Angelico, Fra, c. 1395-1455
 Lippi, Filippo, Fra, c. 1406-1469

NATIONALITY

Italian

DATE

c. 1440/1460

MEDIUM

tempera on poplar panel

TYPE OF OBJECT

Painting

DIMENSIONS

diameter: 137.3 cm (54 1/16 in)

LOCATION

National Gallery of Art, Washington, District of Columbia

PROVENANCE

Probably commissioned by a member of the Medici family, Florence; by inheritance to Lorenzo de' Medici [1449-1492], Florence. [1] probably Marchese Piero Guicciardini [1569-1626]; his widow, Marchesa Simona Machiavelli [1584-1658], Florence; [2] by inheritance to her great-nephew, Count Francesco Guicciardini [1618-1677], Florence; by inheritance to his son, Count Lorenzo Guicciardini [1652-1710], Florence; by inheritance to his son, Count Francesco Gaetano Guicciardini [1699-1780], Florence; by inheritance to his son, Count Lorenzo Guicciardini [1743-1812], Florence; by inheritance to his sons, Count Francesco [1776-1838] and Colonel Ferdinando [1782-1833] Guicciardini, Florence, in 1803; [3] sold July 1810 to Chevalier François-Honoré Dubois, Florence and Paris, as by Botticelli. [4] (Samuel Woodburn, London), by 1826, as by Fra Angelico. [5] William Coningham [1815-

1884], London; (his sale, Christie & Manson, London, 9 June 1849, no. 34, as by Filippo Lippi). [6] Alexander Barker [d. 1873], London, by 1851; [7] (his sale, Christie, Manson & Woods, London, 6 June 1874, no. 42, as by Filippino Lippi); [8] purchased by (Giovanni Calvetti [d. 1875], London) for Sir Francis Cook, 1st bt. [1817-1901], Doughty House, Richmond, Surrey; by inheritance to his son, Sir Frederick Lucas Cook, 2nd bt. [1844-1920], Doughty House; by inheritance to his son, Sir Herbert Frederick Cook, 3rd bt. [1868-1939], Doughty House; by inheritance to his son, Sir Francis Ferdinand Maurice Cook, 4th bt. [1907-1978], Doughty House, and Cothay Manor, Somerset; sold February 1947 through (Francis A. Drey, London) to the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, New York, as by Filippo Lippi; [9] gift 1952 to NGA. [1] The inventory drawn up after the death of Lorenzo the Magnificent is known today from a copy made on 23 December 1512, in the Archivio di Stato in Florence; see E. Müntz, *Les Collections des Médicis au XVe siècle*, Paris and London, 1888: 60 (fol. 6 of the manuscript): "Nella chamera grande terrena detta chamera di Lorenzo...uno tondo grande...la nostra Donna e nostro Signore e e' Magi che vanno a offerire, di mano di fra Giovanni, f. 100" ("In the large ground-floor bedroom called Lorenzo's bedroom...a large tondo...our Lady and our Lord and the Magi who come to bring offerings, from the hand of Fra Giovanni, f. 100"). The high value assigned to the panel (considering that the three famous panels of the *Battle of San Romano* by Paolo Uccello as well as two other paintings by Uccello and a sixth by Pesellino, all in that same room, were estimated as worth 300 florins collectively) leads us to believe that the painting described was compositionally quite elaborate; this offers some--albeit slender--evidence for identifying the Medici tondo as NGA 1952.2.2. [2] The Washington tondo and another tondo of the same subject (now in the National Gallery, London) are apparently recorded in an inventory verified on 20 April 1643 by Simona Machiavelli, the widow of Piero Guicciardini, and confirmed by her great-nephew Francesco Guicciardini on 31 July 1665 (Archivio Guicciardini, filza XLIV, ins. 7). In Valentina Fallani's study of Piero's important collection of paintings (Valentina Fallani, "Piero Guicciardini e la sua quadreria fidecommissaria nella Firenze medicea del Seicento" [diss., Università degli Studi di Firenze, 1992]), the inventory is transcribed (172-185) and hypothesized to be a record of the paintings Piero entailed on his heirs (99). The dimensions given for two round paintings depicting the Adoration of the Magi, 2 2/3 and 3 1/3 braccia, somewhat exceed those of the Washington and London pictures, but the discrepancy is probably due to the inclusion of the frames, which are described, in the measurements (as suggested in a letter from Burton Fredericksen to Nicholas Penny of 14 August 2000, copy in NGA curatorial files). An undated inventory made sometime after the 1658 death of Simona Machiavelli seems to record the Washington painting specifically: "Adorazione de' Magi in tondo, del beato Giovanni Angelico domenicano" ("Adoration of the Magi, a tondo, by the Blessed Giovanni Angelico, Dominican") (Archivio Guicciardini, filza XLIV, ins. 5; transcribed in Fallani, "Piero Guicciardini," 187-189). The tondi stayed together, and the memory of their Guicciardini provenance remained alive, until the middle of the nineteenth century, when they become convincingly identifiable with the Washington and London tondi (see notes 4 and 5). If Piero did own the Washington picture, it could have passed from the Medici to the Guicciardini through Piero's father, Agnolo (1506-1581), who had close ties to the Medici (personal communication from Valentina Fallani to Elon Danziger, 13 April 2002). For a complete reconstruction of the early history of the painting see Elon Danziger, "Round Pictures of the Adoration of the Magi from Early Renaissance Florence," *Association for Art History Newsletter* 2, no. 2 (spring 2002): 5-7. [3] According to Paolo Guicciardini, *Cusona*, 2 vols., Florence, 1939: 1:295, Francesco and Ferdinando were "emancipati" and given possession of their inheritance in 1803, while their parents were still living. [4] An inventory of the Guicciardini gallery, dated 1 September 1807 (Archivio Guicciardini, filza XXXV seconda, n. 5; transcribed in Gino Corti, "Due quadrerie in Firenze: la collezione Lorenzi, prima metà del Settecento, e la collezione Guicciardini, 1807," *Paragone* 35, no. 417 [November 1984]: 94-101, and in Fallani 1992: 239-243), was transformed into a bill of sale when "M. Dubois" bought the entire contents (at about two-thirds assessed value) in July 1810. The two tondi were valued at 50 zecchini each. Certain unusual paintings from the Guicciardini gallery reappear at a 17 and 18 March 1813 Paris auction of paintings owned by "Dubois, commissaire de la police à Florence," allowing a more precise identification of the tondi's buyer. Police commissioner for Napoleonic Florence until 1811, Dubois left behind many letters valuable for the history of Florence under French dominion. His title and name are found in Duane Koenig's "The Napoleonic Regime in Tuscany, 1807-1814," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1942: 93. [5] Burton Fredericksen has discovered a 25 March 1826 private-treaty sale catalogue of the stock of Messrs. Woodburn (copies in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; Royal Library, Brussels; and Bibliothèque de l'art et d'archéologie, Paris). It includes two Adoration of the Magi tondi, both with a Guicciardini provenance, attributed to Fra Angelico (no. 1) and Botticelli (no. 2), with diameters nearly identical to those of the Washington and London pictures. They probably went unsold since, as Fredericksen points out (letter to David Alan Brown, 11 July 2000, in NGA curatorial files), J.D. Passavant mentions "older pictures by Fiesole, Sandro Botticelli, and others" that he had seen in the Woodburn gallery in 1831 (Johann David Passavant, *Kunstreise durch England und Belgien*, Frankfurt am Main, 1833: 113, and English ed., *Tour of a German Artist in England*, 2 vols., London, 1836: I:250); these were probably the tondi since (Fredericksen continues) "works by either artist were very rare on the London market at this time." Fredericksen speculates that since Woodburn indicates in the introduction of the catalogue that almost all of the paintings in it had been acquired during recent trips to Italy, France, and Holland, the two tondi may well have been acquired directly from Dubois. He also suggests that "Cunningham bought them directly from Samuel Woodburn sometime thereafter since Woodburn regularly advised Cunningham on his purchases." [6] "The Wise Men of the East offering their Presents to the Infant Christ in the lap of the Virgin, who is seated before a wooden building, with numerous figures around...From the Guicciardini Palace in Florence." Fra Filippo Lippi is suggested as the author. The sale also included the other Guicciardini tondo (no. 38), which was attributed to Filippino Lippi--a reference that makes it almost certain that the panel is to be identified, as Martin Davies thought, with Botticelli's tondo (no. 1033) in the London National Gallery (Martin Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues. The Earlier Italian Schools*, 2nd rev. ed., London, 1961: 102 note 7). [7] In Gustav Friedrich Waagen, *Treasures of Art in Great Britain*, 3 vols., London, 1854: 2:125, a compilation of paintings seen on 1850 and 1851 visits to England, the author describes a painting in Barker's collection that he attributes to Benozzo Gozzoli as "a very rich circular composition, and one of the finest specimens of the early time of this great master." Several distinctive aspects point to the Washington tondo: "it breathes the purity and intensity of religious feeling which distinguished [Gozzoli's] master Fiesole [Fra Angelico]"; "[Gozzoli's originality] is seen in many an animated action and also in the rich accessories"; "[there are] two peacocks, somewhat too large in proportion." Although what Waagen took for a second peacock is actually two pheasants, the disproportion between the birds and their surroundings in the Washington painting and, more

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importantly, the picture's close affinities with Angelico's late activity (and therefore the artistic milieu of Gozzoli's beginnings), are in accord with the characteristics of the work described by Waagen. Moreover, as Waagen specifies, the Barker Adoration was "formerly in the collection of Mr. Coningham." The other Coningham tondo, seen and described by Waagen, *Treasures*, 1854: 3:3) in the collection of W. Fuller Maitland at Stansted Hall as a work by Filippino Lippi, is the London Botticelli, acquired from Maitland's son in 1878. [8] Some confusion has been caused by the fact that the 1874 Barker sale catalogue includes two tondi representing the Adoration of the Magi that are described in a very similar manner: no. 44 is attributed to Filippo Lippi and no. 42 to Filippino, but both are claimed to contain "portraits of the Accajuoli [sic] family." As NGA 1952.2.2 was bought by Sir Francis Cook, through his agent, at this very sale, and Tancred Borenius, *A Catalogue of the Paintings at Doughty House, Richmond & Elsewhere in the Collection of Sir Frederick Cook Bt. I. Italian Schools*, London, 1913: 21, specifies that the panel was lot 42, there is no serious reason to doubt his assertion in spite of the alleged Acciaiuoli portraits. Actually, the Washington *Adoration* does not seem to contain any portrait, but this claim derives, very likely, from a confusion with no. 44 of the Barker sale, probably the Domenico Veneziano tondo in the Berlin Gemäldegalerie (no. 95A). (That painting reappeared in the 1879 Barker sale, as noted in the *London Times*, 23 June 1879: 12, which gives the diameter and 1874 sale price, proving the identification of lot 44 with the Berlin tondo.) In Domenico's painting, two of the Magi as well as several members of their retinue appear to be portraits, and it is quite possible that this panel was owned sometime earlier by the Acciaiuoli family. [9] Before World War II the most important paintings from the Cook collection were sent to the United States for safekeeping. They were exhibited at the Toledo (Ohio) Museum of Art from 1944 to 1945, and at two museums in Canada in 1945. After complicated negotiations on the eve of the paintings' return to England, the Kress Foundation purchased a number of works, including NGA 1952.2.2. See copies of correspondence in NGA curatorial files.

ACCESSION NUMBER

1952.2.2

KRESS NUMBER

1425

PICHETTO NUMBER

47020

LEGACY NGA NUMBER

1085

NGA LOAN NUMBER

86

1 ACQUISITION

Drey, Francis A., February 18, 1947

1 DISTRIBUTION

Gift to National Gallery of Art, February 21, 1952

EXTERNAL LINKS

Related Collection Record

<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.41581.html>

Related National Gallery of Art Library Image Collections Record

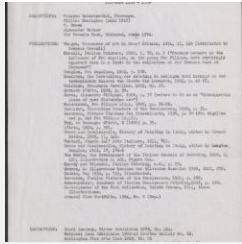
https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1p5jkvq/alma99254273804896

Related National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalog

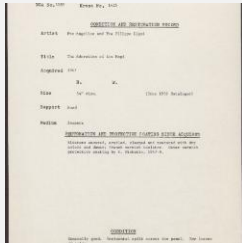
https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1cl1g8d/alma992014793504896

4 ARCHIVAL ITEMS

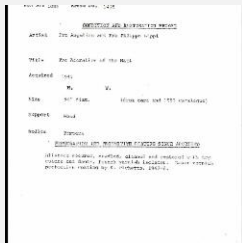
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K1425 - Art object record, circa 1930s-1950s



K1425 - Condition and restoration record, circa 1950s-1960s



K1425 - Condition and restoration record, circa 1950s-1960s



K1425 - Examination summary, 1991

RECORD LINK

<https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/2039>